



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



AURORA COUNTY WORLD WAR II VETERAN HONORED

Earlier this week, Aurora County Veterans Service Officer Ron Falor joined Goeres-Doering American Legion Post #96 Commander John Keiffer in honoring one of South Dakota's great World War II Veterans.

Falor and Keiffer presented Don Reeves with his World War II Victory Medal, as well as a proclamation from District 6 American Legion.

Reeves is one of two World War II Veterans still alive in Aurora County. Reeves served in the Navy Seabees.



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VA AND AMERICA SALUTES YOU PARTNER TO BRING ATTENTION TO SUICIDE PREVENTION SOURCES

As part of its ongoing effort to prevent Veteran suicide, The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced a new partnership with non-profit organization [America Salutes You](#), to raise awareness of mental health resources for service members, veterans, and their loved ones.



The partnership will promote the VA's [Be There](#) campaign and share [suicide prevention resources](#) through videos, public service announcements, and broadcast events streaming online and airing on television networks across the country.

Reach out and stay connected to the Veteran in your life. *Be There.*

For a Veteran facing hard times, your support can provide hope when it's needed most—and you already have what it takes to show you care. Take a few minutes to check in today.

“Educating the public about suicide prevention resources is key to curbing veteran suicide,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “The VA’s partnership with America Salutes You shows a solid combined effort towards improving veterans’ overall health and well-being.”

Through this partnership, America Salutes You will host concerts and events to educate veterans and their loved ones about suicide prevention with an emphasis on access to VA care. As part of the [VA's National Strategy for Preventing Veteran Suicide](#), these events use a public health approach to reach veterans in their communities and aim to raise awareness about mental health, social determinates of suicide, and suicide prevention resources through social media and streaming services.

Veterans who are in crisis or having thoughts of suicide, and those who know a veteran in crisis, can call VCL for confidential support 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1, send a text message to 838255, or chat online at [VeteransCrisisLine.net/Chat](#).

VA CONFIRMS AUTHORITY FOR ITS HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS TO PRACTICE ACROSS STATE LINES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it published an interim final rule affirming the VA's current policy allowing VA health care professionals to practice across state lines in accordance with the scope and requirements of their VA employment, regardless of conflicting state requirements.

This regulation allows the VA the flexibility to mobilize and hire qualified health care professionals from any state and quickly place them in areas of need — which is especially important during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#).

The VA maintains and continues to exercise this authority. Reaching beyond the coronavirus pandemic and as identified in the ["VA's Fourth Mission"](#), the rule confirms the VA's authority to allow VA health care professionals, who may regularly cross state lines, to deliver care at other VA medical centers, as well as specific private hospitals, state veterans homes, and nursing homes.

"As the nation's largest integrated health care system, it is critical the VA health care professionals are able to deliver services in regions other than where they may be licensed, registered, certified, or limited by a state requirement," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "Whether we are assisting states dealing with natural disasters or even more so now with their pandemic response, the VA is working diligently to get the appropriate, qualified staff to those communities in need as quickly as possible."

This regulation confirms VA health care professionals are able to practice where they are needed most, regardless of state license, certification, registration, or other requirement, including professionals supporting assignments for "VA's Fourth Mission" or staffing smaller, rural locations, including mobile health units.

Since the start of the pandemic, the VA has deployed more than 3,000 health care professionals to 47 states and the District of Columbia. They have served at civilian facilities, the Indian Health Service, state veterans homes, and other VA medical facilities affected by COVID-19. These efforts helped veterans and their communities by rapidly moving staff and equipment to assist various parts of the country experiencing serious and critical shortages of health care resources. This regulation ensures the VA can continue to serve veterans and support national, state, and local emergency management, public health, safety, and homeland security efforts.

Members of the public may comment on this interim-final rule so long as received on or before Jan. 11, 2021 at www.regulations.gov and search for RIN 2900-AQ94.

VA RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS FOR COVID-19 CLINICAL TRIALS

As part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department announced its nationwide effort to [recruit volunteers for COVID-19 clinical trials](#) at select VA facilities across the country.

More than [50 VA medical centers](#) are participating in trials to test vaccines and treatments for COVID-19.

“The VA is eager to play a role in this important endeavor,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.

“Volunteering for our trials is a way people can help our country more quickly find vaccines and treatments to end the pandemic and get life back to normal.”

The VA’s volunteer list is open to veterans and non-veterans, 18 years old or older. Participation in any research study is strictly voluntary. Volunteers go through an informed-consent process that ensures they understand the risks and benefits to joining a study before they make the decision to participate.

Vaccines being studied by the VA include candidates developed by Moderna, AstraZeneca, Pfizer, and Janssen. The VA’s trials for COVID-19 treatments include remdesivir, monoclonal antibodies, Tocilizumab, and others.

Sign up for [VA’s volunteer list](#) and get more information about [VA’s COVID-19 clinical trials and research studies](#).

QUILTS OF VALOR DELIVER QUILTS FOR VETERANS

The Hot Springs Quilts of Valor Guild delivered 16 patriotic quilts for veterans at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home.

Each Fall, this local quilting guild, of thirty plus members, delivers quilts to our heroes.

Special thanks to these quilters for sharing their time and talents with our heroes.



VA AND FEDERAL PARTNERS PLAN FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION DISTRIBUTION

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced it is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other federal partners to develop a comprehensive COVID-19 vaccine plan to ensure the VA safely and equitably distributes vaccines once authorized.

The plan will be a phased approach based on scientific and historical evidence, lessons learned from past pandemic vaccine plans, and input from scientific experts both within and outside the VA.

“In October, staff at VA medical facilities conducted important planning exercises in preparation for the vaccine,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “These exercises help us to address vaccine distribution, allocation, safety monitoring, and supply tracking.”

COVID-19 vaccine implementation will include an initial limited-supply phase followed by a general implementation phase, when large supplies of the vaccine will be available to veterans who want to receive one.

VA experts in ethics, health equity, infectious disease, logistics, pandemic planning, pharmacy and public health; as well as those in the areas of change management, clinicians from various disciplines, data, education, IT, safety and training; along with government partners, were sought for input to help develop the plan. The VA also conducted veteran listening sessions for valuable feedback in the planning process.

To learn the latest information visit [CDC COVID-19 Vaccine](https://www.cdc.gov/covid19/vaccine/).

CORSON COUNTY NAMES DYDA AS COUNTY VSO

Corson County Commissioners have named Kevin Dyda as their new county veterans service officer. Dyda replaces Christen Schneider.

Dyda's office hours will be 8:00 am—5:00 pm on Tuesdays. Kevin can be reached at 605-273-4416 or corsonvso@sdplains.com.

Please join SDDVA in welcoming Kevin to the SDDVA network.



VA REPORT LISTS 71 TOP CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IMPROVEMENTS AND INITIATIVES

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) released the VA Customer Experience Accomplishments Report detailing 71 major initiatives to improve customer service for veterans, their families, caregivers, and survivors.

Improving customer service as a top priority at the VA was established in 2018 and it challenged the department to rethink VA customer interactions, designating the Veterans Experience Office as the "voice of the veteran."

"The goal is to provide veterans a modern, streamlined, and responsive customer experience (CX)," said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. "The VA actively engages in efforts that maximize the collective impact of stakeholders delivering federal, state, and local services for improving outcomes where veterans live, work, and raise their families."

Veterans have validated the VA's efforts with trust in the VA health care reaching an all-time high in April and VA-wide trust up 16 points since January 2016, relying on 5.7 million real-time responses from 66 customer feedback surveys to improve service recovery and guide program improvements. The report shares the accomplishments representing major achievements in the strategic deployment of VEO's shared CX capabilities to include:

- Implementing a new electronic health record system providing seamless veteran patient records access between Department of Defense, community care providers, and the VA.
- Connecting with transitioning veterans during their first year of separation via Solid Start.
- Honoring nearly four million veterans interred at VA national cemeteries with a digital memorial space.
- Improving access to the Board of Veterans' Appeals with virtual hearings.
- Connecting veterans to resources more than 238 million times via VA's weekly e-mail.
- Answering close to three million customer calls via 800-MyVA411 and the White House VA Hotline which both offer general assistance agents available immediately.

The VA has integrated this culture of customer service for creating the Department's first customer service policy and CX directive, codifying customer experience principles in the Code of Federal Regulations, and publishing a practitioner's guide — the CX cookbook to help other government agencies adopt customer-centric principles as part of its role as the Lead Agency Partner for the President's Management Agenda Cross-Agency Priority Goal on Improving Customer Experience with Federal Services.

Watch the State of Veteran Customer Experience for more information or visit the Veterans Experience Office.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Nov 26-27—State Offices are closed

Dec 8—Governor's State of the Budget Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Dec 14—Wreath Laying Ceremony—Capitol Lake Flaming Fountain—Pierre—11:00 am (CT)

Dec 15—SDDVA Mini Conference via ZOOM—10:00 am (CT)

Dec 24-25—State Offices are closed

Jan 12—Governor's State of the State Address—1:00 pm (CT)

Jan 13—SDDVA/SD Veterans Council Legislative Reception

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South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/default.html>

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